

awakening. I am convinced we can't resolve all the problems in this country by passing another piece of legislation or throwing another trillion dollars at a problem. We need the good hands of the Almighty God to guide us through these days, and we need a spiritual awakening. That certainly is my utmost prayer.

Mr. Speaker, I wish each of my colleagues continued success here in Congress and a Merry Christmas to each one.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. LAMB) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMB. Mr. Speaker, this is my last speech.

The first time that I walked in here, I looked all around the Chamber the way that new Members do, and it really struck me that there are only two paintings in here. They are right behind me now. One is of George Washington and the other is of General Lafayette.

I think what struck me is that neither man ever served in this House, but on that first day, I felt that they were looking right at me and saying, we have a message for you: Don't take this place for granted. Other people had to fight for us to be able to do what we do in here.

On that first day, I had no idea that within less than 3 years, the D.C. police and the Capitol Police would have to fight for us again right here, that hundreds of them would be injured, that some of them would give their lives just so that we can walk back in that night and do our job.

I saw a recent poll that showed that just 21 percent of Americans approve of the job that we do in here; 75 percent of Americans disapprove. And most of us know why that is. We have been in our Congressional districts during a government shutdown and after we fail to pass yet another bill that most Americans support, and also because the bad news about this place travels much farther and much faster than the good news ever does.

But I just keep thinking about how those officers fought for this place. They fought for us. And I think they would do it all over again if you asked them to.

We can take confidence in that fact. We can take confidence in the fact that this institution did its job on January 7, hours after being attacked on January 6. We can take confidence in the fact that since then our fellow Americans have continued to reject so many candidates around the country who are not committed to this democracy.

If I could only make one observation on my way out the door here, is that I think we all have to be confident about this institution and we should be more confident in ourselves.

Our failures are noticed more. We all know that. But our successes are real.

And we have to value those successes because they are a credit to people like Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick or to Representative John Lewis or to a young Air Force staff sergeant from my district named Dylan Elchin, people who sacrificed and shed blood for this democracy and for what it means.

The things that we have done in here and that you will continue to do next term reflect the greatness of these people. I keep thinking about these brown cardboard boxes of food that the Department of Agriculture put together during the pandemic. They rushed them to food banks, and I loaded a lot of these boxes into people's cars when I was back in my district.

These were honest and good people. In their trunks, these were people that had work boots and tools; they never thought they were going to need something from a food bank. But it was our votes that fed those people and gave them help in their hour of need.

I could go on and on about the things that we have done in this room that are so special. My staff knows I talk endlessly about the fact that our district was home to the first-ever civilian nuclear power plant, and its successor power plant was at risk when we came into office. It is now secure because of the bipartisan infrastructure bill and the Inflation Control Act; thousands and thousands of jobs, clean power that our region needs in investment and science.

I would talk about the teamsters and the miners and how we saved their pension if I had time.

How we rebuilt a bridge in Pittsburgh in less than 1 year because of Federal funds.

How the microchips and hydrogen that we have set aside money for are themselves an expression of so much confidence in our future in this country.

My time is up, so I will just say that I don't want to deny that we have our problems in this country, we definitely do, but I have only been here for 4 years, and it is obvious to me that we have everything we need to be successful. For an Irish guy, that is a very emotional thought, but I have seen it.

When I was a kid, I had this plaque that my grandmother gave me that said the words of St. Paul, which were that we have a responsibility to stir into flame all the gifts that God has given us.

God has given this country so many incredible gifts. I just think we have to be worthy of that. We have to honor our inheritance; and on our best days, for the last 4½ years, we have done that. It has been the honor of my life to do that.

Mr. Speaker, to all my colleagues, I just say that I am confident in you. I know what you all are capable of and what this institution is capable of.

To my constituents, I say thank you. It has been a tremendous privilege to be here in your name.

VA'S PACT ACT WEEK OF ACTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the VA's PACT Act Week of Action. Since 9/11, nearly 3.5 million Americans have been exposed to burn pits and other dangerous substances during their time in military service.

It is critically important that they receive the care that they need before it is too late.

This week, we are raising awareness about the health benefits available to them as a result of the PACT Act being signed into law.

Southern Illinois veterans and their families can attend an event with the Marion VA tomorrow, Thursday, December 15, to learn about the care and benefits available to them, including toxic exposure screening, healthcare, enrollment benefits, and claims assistance. It will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. Central Time, at John A. Logan College in Carterville.

Similar events will be hosted all over the region and all over the country, as well.

Now, the veterans need to know you can find out more information at VA.gov/PACT or by calling 1-800-698-2411.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage any and all of our veterans who would be eligible for this care to be proactive in getting the help that they need.

RECOGNIZING MARIA TRIPPLAAR

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to celebrate the service of one of my staffers on the VA committee.

Mrs. Maria Tripplaar has been my staff director, counsel, and friend for the last 5 years as we have worked to deliver on the promises that we have made to our veterans.

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Through her counsel and leadership, we have achieved landmark legislative wins for veterans, their families, and their survivors, particularly the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, the Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act, the PACT Act, and so many other notable and worthwhile laws.

All the while, she was raising two young children and helping us do all of that.

Maria, thank you for your dedication to America's veterans and the success of our committee. We wish you well as you move to the next chapter of your life.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LOWENTHAL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, just over 30 years ago, I made the decision